

CHAPTER IV.

CHRISTIANITY MISUNDERSTOOD BY MEN OF SCIENCE.

Attitude of Men of Science to Religions in General--What Religion is, and What is its Significance for the Life of Humanity--Three Conceptions of Life--Christian Religion the Expression of the Divine Conception of Life--Misinterpretation of Christianity by Men of Science, who Study it in its External Manifestations Due to their Criticising it from Standpoint of Social Conception of Life--Opinion, Resulting from this Misinterpretation, that Christ's Moral Teaching is Exaggerated and Cannot be put into Practice--Expression of Divine Conception of Life in the Gospel--False Ideas of Men of Science on Christianity Proceed from their Conviction that they have an Infallible Method of Criticism--From which come Two Misconceptions in Regard to Christian Doctrine--First Misconception, that the Teaching Cannot be put into Practice, Due to the Christian Religion Directing Life in a Way Different from that of the Social Theory of Life--Christianity holds up Ideal, does not lay down Rules--To the Animal Force of Man Christ Adds the Consciousness of a Divine Force--Christianity Seems to Destroy Possibility of Life only when the Ideal held up is Mistaken for Rule--Ideal Must Not be Lowered--Life, According to Christ's Teaching, is Movement--The Ideal and the Precepts--Second Misconception Shown in Replacing Love and Service of God by Love and Service of Humanity--Men of Science Imagine their Doctrine of Service of Humanity and Christianity are Identical--Doctrine of Service of Humanity Based on Social Conception of

Life--Love for Humanity, Logically Deduced from Love of Self, has No Meaning because Humanity is a Fiction--Christian Love Deduced from Love of God, Finds its Object in the whole World, not in Humanity Alone--Christianity Teaches Man to Live in Accordance with his Divine Nature--It Shows that the Essence of the Soul of Man is Love, and that his Happiness Ensues from Love of God, whom he Recognizes as Love within himself.

Now I will speak of the other view of Christianity which hinders the true understanding of it--the scientific view.

Churchmen substitute for Christianity the version they have framed of it for themselves, and this view of Christianity they regard as the one infallibly true one.

Men of science regard as Christianity only the tenets held by the different churches in the past and present; and finding that these tenets have lost all the significance of Christianity, they accept it as a religion which has outlived its age.

To see clearly how impossible it is to understand the Christian teaching from such a point of view, one must form for oneself an idea of the place actually held by religions in general, by the Christian religion in particular, in the life of mankind, and of the significance attributed to them by science.

Just as the individual man cannot live without having some theory of the meaning of his life, and is always, though often unconsciously, framing his conduct in accordance with the meaning he attributes to his life, so too associations of men living in similar conditions--nations--cannot but have theories of the meaning of their associated life and conduct ensuing from those theories. And as the individual man, when he attains a fresh stage of growth, inevitably changes his philosophy of life, and the grown-up man sees a different meaning in it from the child, so too associations of men--nations--are bound to change their philosophy of life and the conduct ensuing from their philosophy, to correspond with their development.

The difference, as regards this, between the individual man and humanity as a whole, lies in the fact that the individual, in forming the view of life proper to the new period of life on which he is entering and the conduct resulting from it, benefits by the experience of men who have lived before him, who have already passed through the stage of growth upon which he is entering. But humanity cannot have this aid, because it is always moving along a hitherto untrodden track, and has no one to ask how to understand life, and to act in the conditions on which it is entering and through which no one has ever passed before.

Nevertheless, just as a man with wife and children cannot continue

to look at life as he looked at it when he was a child, so too in the face of the various changes that are taking place, the greater density of population, the establishment of communication between different peoples, the improvements of the methods of the struggle with nature, and the accumulation of knowledge, humanity cannot continue to look at life as of old, and it must frame a new theory of life, from which conduct may follow adapted to the new conditions on which it has entered and is entering.

To meet this need humanity has the special power of producing men who give a new meaning to the whole of human life--a theory of life from which follow new forms of activity quite different from all preceding them. The formation of this philosophy of life appropriate to humanity in the new conditions on which it is entering, and of the practice resulting from it, is what is called religion.

And therefore, in the first place, religion is not, as science imagines, a manifestation which at one time corresponded with the development of humanity, but is afterward outgrown by it. It is a manifestation always inherent in the life of humanity, and is as indispensable, as inherent in humanity at the present time as at any other. Secondly, religion is always the theory of the practice of the future and not of the past, and therefore it is clear that investigation of past manifestations cannot in any case grasp the essence of religion.

The essence of every religious teaching lies not in the desire for a symbolic expression of the forces of nature, nor in the dread of these forces, nor in the craving for the marvelous, nor in the external forms in which it is manifested, as men of science imagine; the essence of religion lies in the faculty of men of foreseeing and pointing out the path of life along which humanity must move in the discovery of a new theory of life, as a result of which the whole future conduct of humanity is changed and different from all that has been before.

This faculty of foreseeing the path along which humanity must move, is common in a greater or less degree to all men. But in all times there have been men in whom this faculty was especially strong, and these men have given clear and definite expression to what all men felt vaguely, and formed a new philosophy of life from which new lines of action followed for hundreds and thousands of years.

Of such philosophies of life we know three; two have already been passed through by humanity, and the third is that we are passing through now in Christianity. These philosophies of life are three in number, and only three, not because we have arbitrarily brought the various theories of life together under these three heads, but because all men's actions are always based on one of these three views of life--because we cannot view life otherwise than in these

three ways.

These three views of life are as follows: First, embracing the individual, or the animal view of life; second, embracing the society, or the pagan view of life; third, embracing the whole world, or the divine view of life.

In the first theory of life a man's life is limited to his one individuality; the aim of life is the satisfaction of the will of this individuality. In the second theory of life a man's life is limited not to his own individuality, but to certain societies and classes of individuals: to the tribe, the family, the clan, the nation; the aim of life is limited to the satisfaction of the will of those associations of individuals. In the third theory of life a man's life is limited not to societies and classes of individuals, but extends to the principle and source of life--to God.

These three conceptions of life form the foundation of all the religions that exist or have existed.

The savage recognizes life only in himself and his personal desires. His interest in life is concentrated on himself alone. The highest happiness for him is the fullest satisfaction of his desires. The motive power of his life is personal enjoyment. His religion consists in propitiating his deity and in worshiping his

gods, whom he imagines as persons living only for their personal aims.

The civilized pagan recognizes life not in himself alone, but in societies of men--in the tribe, the clan, the family, the kingdom --and sacrifices his personal good for these societies. The motive power of his life is glory. His religion consists in the exaltation of the glory of those who are allied to him--the founders of his family, his ancestors, his rulers--and in worshiping gods who are exclusively protectors of his clan, his family, his nation, his government [see Footnote].

[Footnote: The fact that so many varied forms of existence, as the life of the family, of the tribe, of the clan, of the state, and even the life of humanity theoretically conceived by the Positivists, are founded on this social or pagan theory of life, does not destroy the unity of this theory of life. All these varied forms of life are founded on the same conception, that the life of the individual is not a sufficient aim of life--that the meaning of life can be found only in societies of individuals.]

The man who holds the divine theory of life recognizes life not in his own individuality, and not in societies of individualities (in the family, the clan, the nation, the tribe, or the government),

but in the eternal undying source of life--in God; and to fulfill the will of God he is ready to sacrifice his individual and family and social welfare. The motor power of his life is love. And his religion is the worship in deed and in truth of the principle of the whole--God.

The whole historic existence of mankind is nothing else than the gradual transition from the personal, animal conception of life to the social conception of life, and from the social conception of life to the divine conception of life. The whole history of the ancient peoples, lasting through thousands of years and ending with the history of Rome, is the history of the transition from the animal, personal view of life to the social view of life. The whole of history from the time of the Roman Empire and the appearance of Christianity is the history of the transition, through which we are still passing now, from the social view of life to the divine view of life.

This view of life is the last, and founded upon it is the Christian teaching, which is a guide for the whole of our life and lies at the root of all our activity, practical and theoretic. Yet men of what is falsely called science, pseudo-scientific men, looking at it only in its externals, regard it as something outgrown and having no value for us.

Reducing it to its dogmatic side only--to the doctrines of the

Trinity, the redemption, the miracles, the Church, the sacraments, and so on--men of science regard it as only one of an immense number of religions which have arisen among mankind, and now, they say, having played out its part in history, it is outliving its own age and fading away before the light of science and of true enlightenment.

We come here upon what, in a large proportion of cases, forms the source of the grossest errors of mankind. Men on a lower level of understanding, when brought into contact with phenomena of a higher order, instead of making efforts to understand them, to raise themselves up to the point of view from which they must look at the subject, judge it from their lower standpoint, and the less they understand what they are talking about, the more confidently and unhesitatingly they pass judgment on it.

To the majority of learned then, looking at the living, moral teaching of Christ from the lower standpoint of the conception of life, this doctrine appears as nothing but very indefinite and incongruous combination of Indian asceticism, Stoic and Neoplatonic philosophy, and insubstantial anti-social visions, which have no serious significance for our times. Its whole meaning is concentrated for them in its external manifestations--in Catholicism, Protestantism, in certain dogmas, or in the conflict with the temporal power. Estimating the value of Christianity by these phenomena is like a deaf man's judging of the character and quality of music by seeing the movements of the musicians.

The result of this is that all these scientific men, from Kant, Strauss, Spencer, and Renan down, do not understand the meaning of Christ's sayings, do not understand the significance, the object, or the reason of their utterance, do not understand even the question to which they form the answer. Yet, without even taking the pains to enter into their meaning, they refuse, if unfavorably disposed, to recognize any reasonableness in his doctrines; or if they want to treat them indulgently, they condescend, from the height of their superiority, to correct them, on the supposition that Christ meant to express precisely their own ideas, but did not succeed in doing so. They behave to his teaching much as self-assertive people talk to those whom they consider beneath them, often supplying their companions' words: "Yes, you mean to say this and that." This correction is always with the aim of reducing the teaching of the higher, divine conception of life to the level of the lower, state conception of life.

They usually say that the moral teaching of Christianity is very fine, but overexaggerated; that to make it quite right we must reject all in it that is superfluous and unnecessary to our manner of life. "And the doctrine that asks too much, and requires what cannot be performed, is worse than that which requires of men what is possible and consistent with their powers," these learned interpreters of Christianity maintain, repeating what was long ago asserted, and could not but be asserted, by those who crucified

the Teacher because they did not understand him--the Jews.

It seems that in the judgment of the learned men of our time the Hebrew law--a tooth for a tooth, and an eye for an eye--is a law of just retaliation, known to mankind five thousand years before the law of holiness which Christ taught in its place.

It seems that all that has been done by those men who understood Christ's teaching literally and lived in accordance with such an understanding of it, all that has been said and done by all true Christians, by all the Christian saints, all that is now reforming the world in the shape of socialism and communism--is simply exaggeration, not worth talking about.

After eighteen hundred years of education in Christianity the civilized world, as represented by its most advanced thinkers, holds the conviction that the Christian religion is a religion of dogmas; that its teaching in relation to life is unreasonable, and is an exaggeration, subversive of the real lawful obligations of morality consistent with the nature of man; and that very doctrine of retribution which Christ rejected, and in place of which he put his teaching, is more practically useful for us.

To learned men the doctrine of non-resistance to evil by force is exaggerated and even irrational. Christianity is much better

without it, they think, not observing closely what Christianity, as represented by them, amounts to.

They do not see that to say that the doctrine of non-resistance to evil is an exaggeration in Christ's teaching is just like saying that the statement of the equality of the radii of a circle is an exaggeration in the definition of a circle. And those who speak thus are acting precisely like a man who, having no idea of what a circle is, should declare that this requirement, that every point of the circumference should be an equal distance from the center, is exaggerated. To advocate the rejection of Christ's command of non-resistance to evil, or its adaptation to the needs of life, implies a misunderstanding of the teaching of Christ.

And those who do so certainly do not understand it. They do not understand that this teaching is the institution of a new theory of life, corresponding to the new conditions on which men have entered now for eighteen hundred years, and also the definition of the new conduct of life which results from it. They do not believe that Christ meant to say what he said; or he seems to them to have said what he said in the Sermon on the Mount and in other places accidentally, or through his lack of intelligence or of cultivation.

[Footnote: Here, for example, is a characteristic view of that kind from the American journal the ARENA

(October, 1890): "New Basis of Church Life." Treating of the significance of the Sermon on the Mount and non-resistance to evil in particular, the author, being under no necessity, like the Churchmen, to hide its significance, says:

"Christ in fact preached complete communism and anarchy; but one must learn to regard Christ always in his historical and psychological significance. Like every advocate of the love of humanity, Christ went to the furthest extreme in his teaching. Every step forward toward the moral perfection of humanity is always guided by men who see nothing but their vocation. Christ, in no disparaging sense be it said, had the typical temperament of such a reformer. And therefore we must remember that his precepts cannot be understood literally as a complete philosophy of life. We ought to analyze his words with respect for them, but in the spirit of criticism, accepting what is true," etc.

Christ would have been happy to say what he ought, but he was not able to express himself as exactly and clearly as we can in the spirit of criticism, and therefore let us correct him. All that he said about meekness, sacrifice, lowliness, not caring for the

morrow, was said by accident, through lack of knowing how to express himself scientifically.]

Matt. vi. 25-34: "Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than rainment? Behold the fowls of the air; for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? And why take ye thought for rainment? Consider the lilies of the field how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin; and yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek), for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow; for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." Luke xii. 33-34: "Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief

approacheth, neither moth corrupteth. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." Sell all thou hast and follow me; and he who will not leave father, or mother, or children, or brothers, or fields, or house, he cannot be my disciple. Deny thyself, take up thy cross each day and follow me. My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to perform his works. Not my will, but thine be done; not what I will, but as thou wilt. Life is to do not one's will, but the will of God.

All these principles appear to men who regard them from the standpoint of a lower conception of life as the expression of an impulsive enthusiasm, having no direct application to life. These principles, however, follow from the Christian theory of life, just as logically as the principles of paying a part of one's private gains to the commonwealth and of sacrificing one's life in defense of one's country follow from the state theory of life.

As the man of the stale conception of life said to the savage: Reflect, bethink yourself! The life of your individuality cannot be true life, because that life is pitiful and passing. But the life of a society and succession of individuals, family, clan, tribe, or state, goes on living, and therefore a man must sacrifice his own individuality for the life of the family or the state. In exactly the same way the Christian doctrine says to the man of the social, state conception of life, Repent ye--[GREEK WORD]-i. e., bethink yourself, or you will be ruined. Understand that this casual, personal life which now comes into being

and to-morrow is no more can have no permanence, that no external means, no construction of it can give it consecutiveness and permanence. Take thought and understand that the life you are living is not real life--the life of the family, of society, of the state will not save you from annihilation. The true, the rational life is only possible for man according to the measure in which he can participate, not in the family or the state, but in the source of life--the Father; according to the measure in which he can merge his life in the life of the Father. Such is undoubtedly the Christian conception of life, visible in every utterance of the Gospel.

[TRANSCRIBIST'S NOTE: The GREEK WORD above used Greek letters, spelled: mu-epsilon-tau-alpha-nu-omicron-zeta-epsilon-tau-epsilon]

One may not share this view of life, one may reject it, one may show its inaccuracy and its erroneousness, but we cannot judge of the Christian teaching without mastering this view of life. Still less can one criticise a subject on a higher plane from a lower point of view. From the basement one cannot judge of the effect of the spire. But this is just what the learned critics of the day try to do. For they share the erroneous idea of the orthodox believers that they are in possession of certain infallible means for investigating a subject. They fancy if they apply their so-called scientific methods of criticism, there can be no doubt of their conclusion being correct.

This testing the subject by the fancied infallible method of science is the principal obstacle to understanding the Christian religion for unbelievers, for so-called educated people. From this follow all the mistakes made by scientific men about the Christian religion, and especially two strange misconceptions which, more than everything else, hinder them from a correct understanding of it. One of these misconceptions is that the Christian moral teaching cannot be carried out, and that therefore it has either no force at all--that is, it should not be accepted as the rule of conduct--or it must be transformed, adapted to the limits within which its fulfillment is possible in our society. Another misconception is that the Christian doctrine of love of God, and therefore of his service, is an obscure, mystic principle, which gives no definite object for love, and should therefore be replaced by the more exact and comprehensible principles of love for men and the service of humanity.

The first misconception in regard to the impossibility of following the principle is the result of men of the state conception of life unconsciously taking that conception as the standard by which the Christian religion directs men, and taking the Christian principle of perfection as the rule by which that life is to be ordered; they think and say that to follow Christ's teaching is impossible, because the complete fulfillment of all that is required by this teaching would put an end to life. "If a man were to carry out all that Christ teaches, he would destroy

his own life; and if all men carried it out, then the human race would come to an end," they say.

"If we take no thought for the morrow, what we shall eat and what we shall drink, and wherewithal we shall be clothed, do not defend our life, nor resist evil by force, lay down our life for others, and observe perfect chastity, the human race cannot exist," they say.

And they are perfectly right if they take the principle of perfection given by Christ's teaching as a rule which everyone is bound to fulfill, just as in the state principles of life everyone is bound to carry out the rule of paying taxes, supporting the law, and so on.

The misconception is based precisely on the fact that the teaching of Christ guides men differently from the way in which the precepts founded on the lower conception of life guide men. The precepts of the state conception of life only guide men by requiring of them an exact fulfillment of rules or laws. Christ's teaching guides men by pointing them to the infinite perfection of their heavenly Father, to which every man independently and voluntarily struggles, whatever the degree of his imperfection in the present.

The misunderstanding of men who judge of the Christian principle

from the point of view of the state principle, consists in the fact that on the supposition that the perfection which Christ points to, can be fully attained, they ask themselves (just as they ask the same question on the supposition that state laws will be carried out) what will be the result of all this being carried out? This supposition cannot be made, because the perfection held up to Christians is infinite and can never be attained; and Christ lays down his principle, having in view the fact that absolute perfection can never be attained, but that striving toward absolute, infinite perfection will continually increase the blessedness of men, and that this blessedness may be increased to infinity thereby.

Christ is teaching not angels, but men, living and moving in the animal life. And so to this animal force of movement Christ, as it were, applies the new force-the recognition of Divine perfection-and thereby directs the movement by the resultant of these two forces..

To suppose that human life is going in the direction to which Christ pointed it, is just like supposing that a little boat afloat on a rabid river, and directing its course almost exactly against the current, will progress in that direction.

Christ recognizes the existence of both sides of the parallelogram, of both eternal indestructible forces of which the life of man is compounded: the force of his animal nature and the

force of the consciousness of Kinship to God. Saying nothing of the animal force which asserts itself, remains always the same, and is therefore independent of human will, Christ speaks only of the Divine force, calling upon a man to know it more closely, to set it more free from all that retards it, and to carry it to a higher degree of intensity.

In the process of liberating, of strengthening this force, the true life of man, according to Christ's teaching, consists. The true life, according to preceding religions, consists in carrying out rules, the law; according to Christ's teaching it consists in an ever closer approximation to the divine perfection held up before every man, and recognized within himself by every man, in an ever closer and closer approach to the perfect fusion of his will in the will of God, that fusion toward which man strives, and the attainment of which would be the destruction of the life we know.

The divine perfection is the asymptote of human life to which it is always striving, and always approaching, though it can only be reached in infinity.

The Christian religion seems to exclude the possibility of life only when men mistake the pointing to an ideal as the laying down of a rule. It is only then that the principles presented in Christ's teaching appear to be destructive of life. These principles, on

the contrary, are the only ones that make true life possible.

Without these principles true life could not be possible.

"One ought not to expect so much," is what people usually say in discussing the requirements of the Christian religion. "One cannot expect to take absolutely no thought for the morrow, as is said in the Gospel, but only not to take too much thought for it; one cannot give away all to the poor, but one must give away a certain definite part; one need not aim at virginity, but one must avoid debauchery; one need not forsake wife and children, but one must not give too great a place to them in one's heart," and so on.

But to speak like this is just like telling a man who is struggling on a swift river and is directing his course against the current, that it is impossible to cross the river rowing against the current, and that to cross it he must float in the direction of the point he wants to reach.

In reality, in order to reach the place to which he wants to go, he must row with all his strength toward a point much higher up.

To let go the requirements of the ideal means not only to diminish the possibility of perfection, but to make an end of the ideal itself. The ideal that has power over men is not an ideal

invented by someone, but the ideal that every man carries within his soul. Only this ideal of complete infinite perfection has power over men, and stimulates them to action. A moderate perfection loses its power of influencing men's hearts.

Christ's teaching only has power when it demands absolute perfection--that is, the fusion of the divine nature which exists in every man's soul with the will of God--the union of the Son with the Father. Life according to Christ's teaching consists of nothing but this setting free of the Son of God, existing in every man, from the animal, and in bringing him closer to the Father.

The animal existence of a man does not constitute human life alone. Life, according to the will of God only, is also not human life. Human life is a combination of the animal life and the divine life. And the more this combination approaches to the divine life, the more life there is in it.

Life, according to the Christian religion, is a progress toward the divine perfection. No one condition, according to this doctrine, can be higher or lower than another. Every condition, according to this doctrine, is only a particular stage, of no consequence in itself, on the way toward unattainable perfection, and therefore in itself it does not imply a greater or lesser degree of life. Increase of life, according to this, consists in nothing but the quickening of the progress toward perfection. And

therefore the progress toward perfection of the publican Zaccheus, of the woman that was a sinner, and of the robber on the cross, implies a higher degree of life than the stagnant righteousness of the Pharisee. And therefore for this religion there cannot be rules which it is obligatory to obey. The man who is at a lower level but is moving onward toward perfection is living a more moral, a better life, is more fully carrying out Christ's teaching, than the man on a much higher level of morality who is not moving onward toward perfection.

It is in this sense that the lost sheep is dearer to the Father than those that were not lost. The prodigal son, the piece of money lost and found again, were more precious than those that were not lost.

The fulfillment of Christ's teaching consists in moving away from self toward God. It is obvious that there cannot be definite laws and rules for this fulfillment of the teaching. Every degree of perfection and every degree of imperfection are equal in it; no obedience to laws constitutes a fulfillment of this doctrine, and therefore for it there can be no binding rules and laws.

From this fundamental distinction between the religion of Christ and all preceding religions based on the state conception of life, follows a corresponding difference in the special precepts of the state theory and the Christian precepts. The precepts of the

state theory of life insist for the most part on certain practical prescribed acts, by which men are justified and secure of being right. The Christian precepts (the commandment of love is not a precept in the strict sense of the word, but the expression of the very essence of the religion) are the five commandments of the Sermon on the Mount--all negative in character. They show only what at a certain stage of development of humanity men may not do.

These commandments are, as it were, signposts on the endless road to perfection, toward which humanity is moving, showing the point of perfection which is possible at a certain period in the development of humanity.

Christ has given expression in the Sermon on the Mount to the eternal ideal toward which men are spontaneously struggling, and also the degree of attainment of it to which men may reach in our times.

The ideal is not to desire to do ill to anyone, not to provoke ill will, to love all men. The precept, showing the level below which we cannot fall in the attainment of this ideal, is the prohibition of evil speaking. And that is the first command.

The ideal is perfect chastity, even in thought. The precept, showing the level below which we cannot fall in the attainment of this ideal, is that of purity of married life, avoidance of

debauchery. That is the second command.

The ideal is to take no thought for the future, to live in the present moment. The precept, showing the level below which we cannot fall, is the prohibition of swearing, of promising anything in the future. And that is the third command.

The ideal is never for any purpose to use force. The precept, showing the level below which we cannot fall is that of returning good for evil, being patient under wrong, giving the cloak also. That is the fourth command.

The ideal is to love the enemies who hate us. The precept, showing the level below which we cannot fall, is not to do evil to our enemies, to speak well of them, and to make no difference between them and our neighbors.

All these precepts are indications of what, on our journey to perfection, we are already fully able to avoid, and what we must labor to attain now, and what we ought by degrees to translate into instinctive and unconscious habits. But these precepts, far from constituting the whole of Christ's teaching and exhausting it, are simply stages on the way to perfection. These precepts must and will be followed by higher and higher precepts on the way to the perfection held up by the religion.

And therefore it is essentially a part of the Christian religion to make demands higher than those expressed in its precepts; and by no means to diminish the demands either of the ideal itself, or of the precepts, as people imagine who judge it from the standpoint of the social conception of life.

So much for one misunderstanding of the scientific men, in relation to the import and aim of Christ's teaching. Another misunderstanding arising from the same source consists in substituting love for men, the service of humanity, for the Christian principles of love for God and his service.

The Christian doctrine to love God and serve him, and only as a result of that love to love and serve one's neighbor, seems to scientific men obscure, mystic, and arbitrary. And they would absolutely exclude the obligation of love and service of God, holding that the doctrine of love for men, for humanity alone, is far more clear, tangible, and reasonable.

Scientific men teach in theory that the only good and rational life is that which is devoted to the service of the whole of humanity. That is for them the import of the Christian doctrine, and to that they reduce Christ's teaching. They seek confirmation of their own doctrine in the Gospel, on the supposition that the two doctrines are really the same.

This idea is an absolutely mistaken one. The Christian doctrine has nothing in common with the doctrine of the Positivists, Communists, and all the apostles of the universal brotherhood of mankind, based on the general advantage of such a brotherhood. They differ from one another especially in Christianity's having a firm and clear basis in the human soul, while love for humanity is only a theoretical deduction from analogy.

The doctrine of love for humanity alone is based on the social conception of life.

The essence of the social conception of life consists in the transference of the aim of the individual life to the life of societies of individuals: family, clan, tribe, or state. This transference is accomplished easily and naturally in its earliest forms, in the transference of the aim of life from the individual to the family and the clan. The transference to the tribe or the nation is more difficult and requires special training. And the transference of the sentiment to the state is the furthest limit which the process can reach.

To love one's self is natural to everyone, and no one needs any encouragement to do so. To love one's clan who support and protect one, to love one's wife, the joy and help of one's existence, one's children, the hope and consolation of one's life, and one's parents, who have given one life and education, is

natural. And such love, though far from being so strong as love of self, is met with pretty often.

To love--for one's own sake, through personal pride--one's tribe, one's nation, though not so natural, is nevertheless common. Love of one's own people who are of the same blood, the same tongue, and the same religion as one's self is possible, though far from being so strong as love of self, or even love of family or clan. But love for a state, such as Turkey, Germany, England, Austria, or Russia is a thing almost impossible. And though it is zealously inculcated, it is only an imagined sentiment; it has no existence in reality. And at that limit man's power of transferring his interest ceases, and he cannot feel any direct sentiment for that fictitious entity. The Positivists, however, and all the apostles of fraternity on scientific principles, without taking into consideration the weakening of sentiment in proportion to the extension of its object, draw further deductions in theory in the same direction. "Since," they say, "it was for the advantage of the individual to extend his personal interest to the family, the tribe, and subsequently to the nation and the state, it would be still more advantageous to extend his interest in societies of men to the whole of mankind, and so all to live for humanity just as men live for the family or the state."

Theoretically it follows, indeed, having extended the love and interest for the personality to the family, the tribe, and thence

to the nation and the state, it would be perfectly logical for men to save themselves the strife and calamities which result from the division of mankind into nations and states by extending their love to the whole of humanity. This would be most logical, and theoretically nothing would appear more natural to its advocates, who do not observe that love is a sentiment which may or may not be felt, but which it is useless to advocate; and moreover, that love must have an object, and that humanity is not an object. It is nothing but a fiction.

The family, the tribe, even the state were not invented by men, but formed themselves spontaneously, like ant-hills or swarms of bees, and have a real existence. The man who, for the sake of his own animal personality, loves his family, knows whom he loves: Anna, Dolly, John, Peter, and so on. The man who loves his tribe and takes pride in it, knows that he loves all the Guelphs or all the Ghibellines; the man who loves the state knows that he loves France bounded by the Rhine, and the Pyrenees, and its principal city Paris, and its history and so on. But the man who loves humanity--what does he love? There is such a thing as a state, as a nation; there is the abstract conception of man; but humanity as a concrete idea does not, and cannot exist.

Humanity! Where is the definition of humanity? Where does it end and where does it begin? Does humanity end with the savage, the idiot, the dipsomaniac, or the madman? If we draw a line

excluding from humanity its lowest representatives, where are we to draw the line? Shall we exclude the negroes like the Americans, or the Hindoos like some Englishmen, or the Jews like some others? If we include all men without exception, why should we not include also the higher animals, many of whom are superior to the lowest specimens of the human race.

We know nothing of humanity as an eternal object, and we know nothing of its limits. Humanity is a fiction, and it is impossible to love it. It would, doubtless, be very advantageous if men could love humanity just as they love their family. It would be very advantageous, as Communists advocate, to replace the competitive, individualistic organization of men's activity by a social universal organization, so that each would be for all and all for each.

Only there are no motives to lead men to do this. The Positivists, the Communists, and all the apostles of fraternity on scientific principles advocate the extension to the whole of humanity of the love men feel for themselves, their families, and the state. They forget that the love which they are discussing is a personal love, which might expand in a rarefied form to embrace a man's native country, but which disappears before it can embrace an artificial state such as Austria, England, or Turkey, and which we cannot even conceive of in relation to all humanity, an absolutely mystic conception.

"A man loves himself (his animal personality), he loves his family, he even loves his native country. Why should he not love humanity? That would be such an excellent thing. And by the way, it is precisely what is taught by Christianity." So think the advocates of Positivist, Communistic, or Socialistic fraternity.

It would indeed be an excellent thing. But it can never be, for the love that is based on a personal or social conception of life can never rise beyond love for the state.

The fallacy of the argument lies in the fact that the social conception of life, on which love for family and nation is founded, rests itself on love of self, and that love grows weaker and weaker as it is extended from self to family, tribe, nationality, and state; and in the state we reach the furthest limit beyond which it cannot go.

The necessity of extending the sphere of love is beyond dispute. But in reality the possibility of this love is destroyed by the necessity of extending its object indefinitely. And thus the insufficiency of personal human love is made manifest.

And here the advocates of Positivist, Communistic, Socialistic fraternity propose to draw upon Christian love to make up the default of this bankrupt human love; but Christian love only in

its results, not in its foundations. They propose love for humanity alone, apart from love for God.

But such a love cannot exist. There is no motive to produce it. Christian love is the result only of the Christian conception of life, in which the aim of life is to love and serve God.

The social conception of life has led men, by a natural transition from love of self and then of family, tribe, nation, and state, to a consciousness of the necessity of love for humanity, a conception which has no definite limits and extends to all living things. And this necessity for love of what awakens no kind of sentiment in a man is a contradiction which cannot be solved by the social theory of life.

The Christian doctrine in its full significance can alone solve it, by giving a new meaning to life. Christianity recognizes love of self, of family, of nation, and of humanity, and not only of humanity, but of everything living, everything existing; it recognizes the necessity of an infinite extension of the sphere of love. But the object of this love is not found outside self in societies of individuals, nor in the external world, but within self, in the divine self whose essence is that very love, which the animal self is brought to feel the need of through its consciousness of its own perishable nature.

The difference between the Christian doctrine and those which preceded it is that the social doctrine said: "Live in opposition to your nature [understanding by this only the animal nature], make it subject to the external law of family, society, and state." Christianity says: "Live according to your nature [understanding by this the divine nature]; do not make it subject to anything--neither you (an animal self) nor that of others--and you will attain the very aim to which you are striving when you subject your external self."

The Christian doctrine brings a man to the elementary consciousness of self, only not of the animal self, but of the divine self, the divine spark, the self as the Son of God, as much God as the Father himself, though confined in an animal husk. The consciousness of being the Son of God, whose chief characteristic is love, satisfies the need for the extension of the sphere of love to which the man of the social conception of life had been brought. For the latter, the welfare of the personality demanded an ever-widening extension of the sphere of love; love was a necessity and was confined to certain objects--self, family, society. With the Christian conception of life, love is not a necessity and is confined to no object; it is the essential faculty of the human soul. Man loves not because it is his interest to love this or that, but because love is the essence of his soul, because he cannot but love.

The Christian doctrine shows man that the essence of his soul is love--that his happiness depends not on loving this or that object, but on loving the principle of the whole--God, whom he recognizes within himself as love, and therefore he loves all things and all men.

In this is the fundamental difference between the Christian doctrine and the doctrine of the Positivists, and all the theorizers about universal brotherhood on non-Christian principles.

Such are the two principal misunderstandings relating to the Christian religion, from which the greater number of false reasonings about it proceed. The first consists in the belief that Christ's teaching instructs men, like all previous religions, by rules, which they are bound to follow, and that these rules cannot be fulfilled. The second is the idea that the whole purport of Christianity is to teach men to live advantageously together, as one family, and that to attain this we need only follow the rule of love to humanity, dismissing all thought of love of God altogether.

The mistaken notion of scientific men that the essence of Christianity consists in the supernatural, and that its moral teaching is impracticable, constitutes another reason of the failure of men of the present day to understand

Christianity.